

CRACK DOWN ON MEDICARE FRAUD

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, in an editorial on Friday, USA Today said:

Medicare reform invites doctors to bend the rules. Easing limits on physicians' self-referral is bound to cost the program billions it cannot afford.

USA Today called the deal cut between the American Medical Association and the Speaker a payoff to the AMA. It simply eliminates fraud by legalizing it.

Another newspaper said the Speaker's concessions made an already bad Medicare bill substantially worse. This bill was never designed to give the elderly high-quality care.

What concerns me most about that, Mr. Speaker, is that we can save, and this is a conservative estimate, we can save \$100 billion over the next 7 years by going after fraud.

Instead of cutting Medicare \$270 billion to give tax breaks to the wealthy, we should go after fraud aggressively. Crack down on fraud, that is what the Medicare debate should be about, not cutting Medicare, raising people's premiums and deductibles and copay \$1,000 per person per year so we can give a tax break to the wealthiest Americans.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON MEDICARE

(Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, why are Democrats willing to destroy Medicare and then point an accusing finger at Republicans when we are working hard to save it?

The Democrats' arguments regarding the Republican Medicare plan simply make no sense. They say that Republicans want to destroy Medicare. They say we want to raise premiums and deductibles to pay for a tax cut for the rich. They say we want to close hospitals and deny children and babies access to decent health care. I resent those remarks, especially since my parents are 78 years old and depend on Medicare.

These claims are beyond ludicrous, and by even the most casual scrutiny, no politician in their right mind would ever support such draconian measures, especially when their friends and family would be harmed.

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Let us set the record straight. Republicans will provide more choices for seniors. Slowing of Medicare growth cannot and will not be used to fund our tax cuts. Our plan preserves, protects and strengthens Medicare. It is supported by AMA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, among others. Come on, Democrats, start making sense. Think before you speak.

PRIVATE "HEARINGS"

(Miss COLLINS of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Miss COLLINS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call attention to one of the many undemocratic practices being utilized by the majority party during this session of the Congress. As I am sure you are aware, certain Members of the U.S. House of Representatives—including some freshmen Members—have been claiming to have held something they carelessly refer to as hearings on legislation introduced—or to be introduced—in this Congress, when in fact some of these so-called hearings were conducted without notice to Members of the opposite political party. Others of these so-called hearings were nothing more than secret meetings with special interest groups, not hearings at all. Some of these same Members have then falsely claimed credit for holding an exaggerated number of hearings on certain important bills—including the bill designed to dismantle the Commerce Department, Medicare/Medicaid, and the Clean Water Act—when in reality they were conducting private meetings that arbitrarily denied participation in the legislative process to members of the Democratic party and all other concerned citizens who might be adversely impacted by such legislation. I think it is time to call a halt to such abuses of the legislative process.

VOTE "YES" FOR THE MEDICARE PRESERVATION ACT

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, Medicare is going bankrupt. It took a while, but my Democrat colleagues have finally accepted this fact, and they are now presenting a plan to reform Medicare. This afternoon, I would like to compare their plan with ours.

The Republican plan provides a long-term solution. The Democrat plan ignores the root of Medicare's problems and simply postpones Medicare's bankruptcy for 3 years.

The Republican plan focuses on accountability—it's a fair and realistic plan. The Democrat plan is the epitome of politics as usual—it offers nonsolutions that fail to preserve the program.

In short, the Republican plan saves Medicare from bankruptcy. The Democrat plan saves Democrats for the next election.

Mr. Speaker, the list of major senior groups, medical associations, and others supporting the Republican plan grows every day. I urge my colleagues to vote to save Medicare. Vote "yes" for the Medicare Preservation Act.

TAKE MEDICARE PLAN TO THE TRUSTEES

(Mrs. SCHROEDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I think as we talk about Medicare, the real issue is the trustees. We have some nonpoliticians here, trustees, who oversee Medicare. As we hear people on the other side accusing us of MediScare or that their program is better, or whatever they want to say, all I want to say to them is please take your plan to the trustees and see if it fits what the trustees have asked for.

When they were arresting seniors last week, one senior, as her handcuffs were being put on, looked up at the police officer and said: "Do you have a mother? Why would you do this to me?"

Well, I think all of us do not want to scare our senior citizens, our mothers, or anyone else. The ones they will believe in is the trustees. We will take our plan to the trustees. We dare them to take their plan to the trustees and get their seal of approval.

PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN MEDICARE

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, it is interesting the previous speaker would say that, take your plan to the trustees. They are a bunch of politicians, Reich, Shalala, and Rubin, all appointed by President Clinton. As the gentlewoman well knows, not one of them is an elected Member of Congress. I do not think Members of Congress need to go around pandering to Clinton administration trustees, saying would you please accept our plan. You are all good Democrats.

As the gentlewoman knows, Medicare is a 1964 Blue Cross plan. I want to do something for my mom. I do not want her to drive around in a 1964 Chevrolet Biscayne that we used to have when I was a kid.

We are trying to do what I hope the Democrats are trying to do: Protect, preserve, and strengthen Medicare. We want your help. I agree with the gentlewoman it should not be partisan. It bothers me when I hear countless speech after speech, partisan flame throwing back and forth.

We have to decrease the inflation rate. Medicare is up to an 11-percent inflation rate. We have to bring it down to the 4- to 6-percent range. We have been accused of cutting Medicare, but we are going from \$4,800 to \$6,700 per recipient. We want seniors to have the options and choices on physicians, and so forth.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. I yield to the gentlewoman from Colorado.